

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTO DOMINGO 4138

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TAGS: PINT, PINS, DR
SUB: EFFECT OF RECENT BALAGUER MOVES ON GUZMAN'S ABILITY TO GOVERN

1. A WEEK AGO THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY
SHOWED SIGNS AGAIN OF A CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS IN THE
MAKING. PRES-ELECT GUZMAN FACED NOT ONLY A CHALLENGE FROM THE
ARMED FORCES. HE ALSO HAD TO DEAL WITH THE LEGAL-
POLITICAL PROBLEMS BEING BEQUEATHED TO HIM BY OUTGOING
PRESIDENT BALAGUER, WHO SEEMED TO MANY, IN THE PRESS
AND ELSEWHERE, DETERMINED TO HEM IN, IF NOT CRIPPLE, THE
AUTHORITY OF THE NEW ADMINISTRATION.

2. IN THE LAST FEW DAYS, HOWEVER, THE FAST-GROWING
APPREHENSIONS AND UNCERTAINTIES OF THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS
SEEMED TO DISSIPATE AS IT BECAME CLEARER THAT THE THREAT
OF A CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS PRIOR TO OR SHORTLY AFTER
GUZMAN'S INAUGURATION HAD RECEDED. SEVERAL DEVELOPMENTS HAVE
EASED TENSIONS CONSIDERABLY.

3. ON JULY 25, THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (THE SENATE AND
CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES MEETING JOINTLY) COMPLIED WITH ITS
CONSTITUTIONAL DUTY OF PROCLAIMING AND OFFICIALLY
CERTIFYING GUAMAN AND JACOBO MAJLUTA THE NEXT PRESIDENT
AND VICE PRESIDENT. IT WILL BE RECALLED THAT THE TWO
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LEGISLATIVE BODIES, MADE UP ALMOST ENTIRELY OF BALAGUER'S
FOLLOWERS, EARLIER IN THE MONTH RESOLVED TO HOLD
THE OFFICIAL PROCLAMATION HOSTAGE IF THE CENTRAL ELECTORAL
BOARDS' JULY 7 RULING GIVING CONTROL OF THE SENATE TO BALAGUER'S
REFORMISTA PARTY WERE NOT UPHELD.

4. BALAGUER'S SHUFFLE IN MILITARY ASSIGNMENTS LATE LAST

WEEK, ESPECIALLY THE SWITCH OF POLICE CHIEF NEIT NIVAR SEIJAS TO THE ARMY'S FIRST BRIGADE, WAS WIDELY BELIEVED TO BE THE CRITICAL MOVE THAT WOULD HOBBLE THE INCOMING ADMINISTRATION. THE CEREMONIAL CHANGE OF COMMANDS ON JULY 22-24 WAS THE OCCASION FOR MILITARY LEADERS TO APPEAR PUBLICLY TO HAVE ENDED THEIR OLD RIVALRIES IN FAVOR OF "UNITY" OF THE ARMED FORCES AGAINST SUPPOSED THREATS TO THEIR INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY. THIS COMING TOGETHER OF THE MILITARY WAS ACCOMPANIED BY SHOUTED OATHS OF "VIVA BALAGUER" AND "DOWN WITH COMMUNISM".

5. YET TWO DAYS LATER, GUZMAN MADE A HIGH-PROFILE ROUND OF CALLS ON THE MAIN ARMED FORCES COMMANDS. THE SAME OFFICERS WHO ON JULY 24 SEEMED TO BE SWEARING LOYALTY ONLY TO BALAGUER, ON JULY 26, IN FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS WITH THE PRESIDENT-ELECT, PROMISED GUZMAN THEIR SUPPORT. MGEN ENRIQUE PEREZ Y PEREZ, THE NEW ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF, TOLD GUZMAN IN THEIR TELEVISED MEETING THAT "WE ARE FUNDAMENTALLY OBEDIENT TO THAT WHICH THE PEOPLE HAVE CHOSEN, WHICH IS A NEW GOVERNMENT."

6. GUZMAN FOR HIS PART COMPORTED HIMSELF AS A MAN TAKING CHARGE. IF SOME OF THE OFFICERS HE MET WITH APPEARED STIFF AND AWKWARD ON TELEVISION, HE DID NOT, SMILING JOVIALY AND MAKING COMPLIMENTARY STATEMENTS ABOUT THE ARMED FORCES APPROPRIATE TO THE OCCASION. PRIVATELY, HE ALSO APPEARED CONFIDENTIAL

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MORE SELF ASSURED. ON TUESDAY EVENING, JULY 25, HE WAS DEEPLY CONCERNED THAT BALAGUER WAS ON THE VERGE OF TURNING THE PATRIMONY OF THE NATION OVER TO THE ARMED FORCES AS A MEANS OF FRUSTRATING THE AUTHORITY OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT (REF B). YET ON WEDNESDAY, AFTER HIS MEETINGS WITH THE MILITARY CHIEFS, HE CALLED AN EMBOFF TO SAY HE HAD REASON TO BELIEVE THAT BALAGUER WOULD NOT PUSH THE DRASTIC NEW LAWS, WHICH HE, GUZMAN, FEARED.

7. THE IMPROVEMENT IN ATMOSPHERE FROM THAT WHICH HUNG OVER THE NATION EARLY IN THE WEEK, WHEN IT APPEARED THAT PRESIDENT BALAGUER WOULD USE HIS WIDE POWER TO WEAKEN THE INCOMING GOVERNMENT, WAS TEMPERED, HOWEVER, BY THE KNOWLEDGE THAT THE UNPREDICTABLE BALAGUER HAS NEARLY THREE WEEKS REMAINING IN OFFICE. THE FACT THAT THE PRESENT CONGRESS, WHOSE POWERS WERE SUPPOSED TO EXPIRE THIS WEEK, WAS EXTENDED BY BALAGUER FOR ANOTHER 15 DAYS FURTHER TENDED TO KEEP PEOPLE ON TENTERHOOKS.

8. BALAGUER HAS NOT SIGNED, AND THEREFORE NOT PROMULGATED AS NEW LAW, ANY OF THE PACKAGE OF LEGISLATION WHICH WAS RUSHED THROUGH THE SENATE AND CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES IN

THE PAST TWO WEEKS. NOR HAS BALAGUER SUBMITTED BILLS THAT WOULD ENACT SOME OF THE MORE DAMAGING PROPOSALS THAT HAVE BEEN WIDELY REPORTED. IT WOULD APPEAR THAT BALAGUER, USING AN OLD POLITICAL TECHNIQUE OF HIS, IS STILL TESTING THE WIND, GAUGING HOW FAR HE CAN GO WITHOUT STIRRING WAVES OF NATIONAL PROTEST OVER HIS MOVES TO PACATE HIS RADICAL RIGHT DURING HIS FINAL DAYS. IT ALSO COULD BE THAT HE HAS STAYED FURTHER "INSTANT LEGISLATION" BECAUSE OF THE HUE AND CRY THAT ALREADY HAS BEEN SET UP BY HIS ACTIONS IN THE LAST FORTNIGHT.

9. WHATEVER HIS REAL INTENTIONS AND, ULTIMATELY, HIS FINAL ACTIONS, WITH THE SUDDEN PAUSE IN THE RUSH OF LEGISLATIVE AND ADMINISTRATIVE INITIATIVES HE ORDERED DURING THE CONFIDENTIAL

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JULY 10-21 PERIOD, PREOCCUPATION HAS EASED THAT (A) HIS PURPOSE IS TO CREATE GOVERNMENTAL HAVOC OR (B) HE IS SETTING THE STAGE FOR UNCONSTITUTIONAL ACTION AGAINST THE GUZMAN GOVERNMENT AT SOME FUTURE STAGE. ANOTHER OF HIS OPEN LETTERS PUBLISHED YESTERDAY (JULY 27), SEEMED TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE PUBLIC OUTCRY AND SOUGHT TO REASSURE THE NATION. IN THIS PARTICULAR LETTER, BALAGUER DENIED THAT THE NEXT ADMINISTRATION WOULD INHERIT A BUDGETARY DEFICIT.

10. COMMENT: FROM MANY QUARTERS, ASSESSMENTS OF THE EFFECT OF THE RECENT SPURT OF LAME-DUCK LEGISLATION ON GUZMAN'S ABILITY TO GOVERN ARE TENDING TO SQUARE WITH THAT OF MOST PRD LEADERS-THAT THEY CAN LIVE WITH, OR AT SOME POINT IN THE NEAR FUTURE, CORRECT THESE LAST-MINUTE LEGAL IMPROVISATIONS. THE EMBASSY'S JUDGEMENT, BASED ON OUR SENSE OF THE SITUATION THAT OBTAINS TODAY, IS THAT WHERE PROBLEMS ARISE, "DOMINICANS" SOLUTIONS CAN BE CONTRIVED BY THE NEW GOVERNMENT THAT PROBABLY WOULD PREVAIL.
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